CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND SIXTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 14 September 2000, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Petko Draganov (Bulgaria)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 860th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First, let me welcome the new representative of Israel, Ambassador Yaakov Levy, and, on behalf of all delegations present here, assure him of our cooperation.

I would like to remind you that immediately following this plenary meeting we shall hold an informal plenary to start consideration of our draft annual report, as contained in document CD/WP.511.

As you are all aware, our esteemed colleague, Ambassador Giuseppe Balboni Acqua of Italy, will soon be leaving Geneva to assume other important duties. He has been appointed by his Government to the high post of Head of Protocol of the Italian Republic. Ambassador Balboni Acqua joined us on 30 April 1997 and those of you who were here then may recall that it was also a difficult time when the Conference was grappling with its programme of work. He has brought to our proceedings a wide measure of professionalism and moderation, a recognized capacity to take into account the concerns of all delegations, and a willingness to strive for compromise. I am sure that you will all join me in extending to him and his family our best wishes in their future endeavours.

I have today on my list of speakers the representatives of Italy and China. I would now like to give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Giuseppe Balboni Acqua.

Mr. BALBONI ACQUA (Italy) (translated from French): Thank you, Mr. President. This is the first time that I have taken the floor during the proceedings of the third part of the 2000 session of the Conference, under your guidance. Allow me first of all to congratulate you, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, on your accession to the presidency. I am very happy to see you guide this assembly as the representative of a country with which Italy maintains very close ties of friendship. The prestige and the international role of your country, as well as your personal skills, will be of great use in successfully guiding the drafting of the Conference's final report to the General Assembly, which has always been a very difficult task. I would like to express to you my best wishes and my congratulations on the way in which you have presided over these discussions thus far.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome those colleagues who have recently joined us, namely, the ambassadors of Hungary, Chile, Ecuador, Romania and Israel, and to extend to them my best wishes for their mission in Geneva.

My purpose today is no longer to contribute to the efforts which you have been making as President, but rather to take my leave, because tomorrow I will leave for my country, having been called to other duties. I would not have imagined, three and a half years ago, that I might ever miss the Palais des Nations frescoes José Maria Sert or this Council Chamber of the League of Nations. They fill us with a sense of history and an awareness of the tribulations of the last

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century. I will miss the atmosphere of this "exclusive club", as our Conference is sometimes considered, a genuine school of diplomacy where no one feels that he has surrendered his national position for the benefit of objectives dictated by others.

When I came to Geneva in April 1997, my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lamberto Dini, had delivered his statement to the Conference, stressing the issues which are priorities for our Government and defending in particular the role of the Conference and the specific nature of this unique multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament. Two years later, the Italian Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Patrizia Toia, addressed the Conference and reaffirmed Italy's long-standing aim of intensifying and rendering irreversible the process of nuclear disarmament in pursuit of the ultimate goal of eliminating these weapons. She also expressed the determination of our Government to support any specific and realistic initiatives to accelerate implementation of the plan of action for disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation contained in the document "Principles and Objectives" adopted by consensus at the NPT Conference in 1995.

In my view, Italy's positions, which have been clearly and consistently set forth in the last few years by senior representatives of my Government and several times by myself, are sufficiently precise, understandable and well-known, that they do not require further analysis.

In short, FMCT is our priority. Its negotiating mandate is clear. Italy does not set preconditions for the launching of these negotiations and does not expect such conditions to be set by other delegations. Italy is also prepared to deal with other issues and to begin negotiations on them as soon as consensus and a negotiating mandate have been reached.

Italy is one of the founding countries of the Conference on Disarmament. For that reason, we attach great importance to the development of its activities, which we consider essential for the safeguarding of international peace and security. It is also for that reason that, a few days after my departure, my successor will arrive in Geneva and I am certain that he will also show great commitment to the cause of disarmament and the issues dealt with by this Conference. I hope that substantive issues and realism will finally prevail, as is always the case when there is firm political will to find a solution to problems.

In taking my leave, I would like once again to turn to my colleagues, from the longest serving to those most recently arrived, and to thank them for their approachability and, in many cases, their friendship towards my country, my delegation and me personally. I know that some of them hold important posts in their Governments, and others will do so in the near future. I would like to express my thanks to all of you and hope some day to welcome you to my own country.

I would like to thank our Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, whose courtesy and receptiveness I have deeply appreciated, as well as his discretion and great wisdom. I also thank the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, who over the last few years has shown such great patience, a true virtue, and has taught us the art of hoping. I would also like to thank the hard-working and energetic staff of the secretariat, our interpreters

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for their dedication and all those who contribute discreetly and efficiently to the smooth course of our work. My gratitude also goes to UNIDIR, this small but important international institution, whose dynamism I have come to value so highly under the guidance of its two exceptional directors, Ms. Patricia Lewis and Mr. Christopher Carle.

The ancient Romans said that all roads lead to Rome, headquarters of world Catholicism and centre of a civilization which has influenced the whole world. For those who desire to go there, they should know that as of today, in Rome, they will have one more friend.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Hu Xiaodi.

Mr. HU XIAODI (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, at the outset, let me congratulate you on your assumption of your post as the last President of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament and, inter alia, on guiding the preparation of the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament and the draft resolution to be submitted to the United Nations General Assembly. Your predecessor, Ambassador Armorim, has made valuable efforts towards bridging the differences between the parties and breaking the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, and these merit our high appreciation. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail.

I would like to speak today on the negative impacts of the national anti-missile defence system (NMD) and the relationship between NMD and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

My first point relates to the dire consequences of NMD. Recent years have seen concerted efforts to develop and deploy NMD, with a view to seeking unilateral military and strategic superiority. This negative development has placed the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) in danger of collapse. This in turn could lead to serious consequences and the matter is already being regarded with great concern by the international community.

On 18 July 2000, the Presidents of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation issued a joint statement on missile defence. The Russian and Chinese delegations jointly requested the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament to distribute the statement as an official document, of the Conference on Disarmament, and it was issued under the symbol CD/1622.

The two leaders noted in their statement that the ABM Treaty remains the cornerstone of global strategic stability and international security and forms the basis for a framework of key international agreements designed to reduce and limit strategic offensive weapons and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The collapse of the ABM Treaty would trigger a new round of the arms race and reverse the positive trends that have emerged in international

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politics following the end of the cold war. Any country pressing for an amendment of this fundamental treaty in the realm of arms control and disarmament will have to bear full responsibility for undermining international stability and security and for all the consequences resulting therefrom.

The two leaders also stressed in their statement that the plan to establish NMD, a system prohibited under the ABM Treaty, is a cause of profound concern. It is aimed in essence as seeking unilateral superiority in the military and security arena. Implementation of the plan would have the gravest adverse consequences not only for the security of China, Russia and other States, but also for that of the United States itself and for global strategic stability. The international community should therefore continue to give serious attention to this perilous development and take the necessary measures to halt it.

What, we might ask, will be the grave consequences of the development and deployment of NMD?

First, it will undermine global strategic balance and stability and threaten international peace and security. The ABM Treaty is the cornerstone of global strategic balance and stability. It clearly limits the deployment by its State parties of anti-missile defence systems aimed at protecting their whole territories. NMD, however, is precisely such an anti-missile defence system aimed at protecting the whole territory of a State and, as such, violates the AMB Treaty. Once NMD is deployed, the ABM Treaty will be effectively dead. For a State to seek anti-missile defence capabilities protecting its whole territory is tantamount to seeking unilateral absolute security so as to gain absolute freedom to use or threaten to use force in international relations. As a result, the world may face once again the blackmail of nuclear war and the international situation may become turbulent and unstable.

Second, NMD will seriously obstruct arms control and the disarmament process and pose the danger of triggering a new arms race. The NMD plan is in fact a unilateral nuclear force expansion programme. The Russian Federation has stated in explicit terms that if the United States violates or pulls out of the ABMT Treaty, it will be forced to withdraw from a series of agreements and treaties in the field of arms control and disarmament. Therefore, if NMD is deployed, the results achieved by the United States and Russia over a number of years in bilateral nuclear disarmament will at once be set at naught. NMD will also be detrimental to multilateral arms control and the disarmament process. Other countries will not sit idly by and allow their security to be jeopardized. This may lead to various offensive and defensive measures and countermeasures, ground-based and space-based, which will likely result in an arms race.

Third, NMD will wreck international non-proliferation efforts. Non-nuclear-weapon States regard nuclear disarmament by nuclear-weapon States as the main prerequisite for them to honour their own commitment to remain non-nuclear. As NMD will reverse the process of nuclear disarmament, it is bound to shake the very foundations of non-proliferation. NMD will

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also sow distrust and discord among many countries and this in turn will adversely affect their cooperation in the cause of proliferation. Furthermore, as the anti-missile defence programme proceeds, there will be a proliferation of sophisticated anti-missile defence systems in other countries and regions. This will be tantamount to a proliferation of advanced missile technology, since the technologies for missiles and anti-missile defence are interrelated and mutually convertible.

It is therefore a matter of the utmost urgency that the international community take effective measures to halt this negative development. These are by no means groundless fears or alarmist talk, but a matter of very real concern.

It is true that international treaties have been concluded in the past on the prevention of the deployment of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. It is an incontestable fact, however, that existing international legal mechanisms only prohibit the deployment in outer space of such weapons, but are not concerned with preventing the deployment or use in outer space of new systems of weapons of mass destruction and their components, such as lasers, particle beams, X-rays and kinetic weapons. It so happens that these are also the very weapons envisaged for outer space by many programmes and projects, ranging from Star Wars to NMD. The existing international legal instruments must therefore be augmented and improved, not only to continue to ensure that weapons of mass destruction will never be introduced into outer space, but also - and more important and urgent - that they prevent the weaponization of outer space with the use of any other types of weapons. We are convinced that, like China, the majority of countries in the world want effective measures to be taken now to prevent the weaponization of outer space, rather than wait and in the future have to curb weapons in outer space, or even embark on another non-proliferation campaign, this time for space weapons.

We believe therefore that it is an absolute necessity for new international legal instruments to be negotiated now, to prevent the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space. This position has enjoyed extensive support from the international community, as demonstrated by the adoption, once again by an overwhelming majority, of the resolution on the prevention of the arms race in outer space by the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

My second point relates to the relationship between NMD and the arms race in outer space. It is claimed that NMD systems are not outer space weapons and will not lead to an arms race in outer space. It is further asserted that the time is not yet ripe for negotiations on outer space, and that to call now for such negotiations is to put the cart before the horse. What, we might then ask, is the true relationship between NMD and the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space?

Regardless whether they are the so-called "limited systems" or "more advanced systems", NMD systems undoubtedly include space weapon systems. Some of these sophisticated systems using weapons other than weapons of mass destruction will be space-based, providing target information and guidance for ground-based weapons systems,

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while others will be deployed in outer space or on the ground, intercepting and destroying targets in space or attacking from space targets within the atmosphere. Outer space will thus be turned into a battlefield.

It is obvious therefore that, once the ABM Treaty is discarded and the door opened for NMD, advanced weapons systems will be introduced into outer space, leading to its weaponization. Many documents, including important policy statements by political parties, point to such a prospect. Other countries are bound to make the necessary responses, as their essential security interests will be adversely affected. As a result, it is very likely that an arms race in outer space will follow.

It has been solemnly claimed that the only intention is to develop a limited NMD which has nothing to do with outer space. If that is so, why is there such opposition to negotiations on a treaty preventing an arms race in outer space?

My third point relates to the relationship between FMCT and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It has been alleged that negotiations on FMCT are deadlocked because they have been held hostage to negotiations on PAROS and that the linkage between FMCT and PAROS must therefore be removed.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that, as the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament ought to give priority to the current most urgent and important issue in the international arena. In the light of the above analysis we are fully convinced that prevention of the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space is precisely such an issue.

Given that position, we would never oppose negotiations on FMCT, which is a top priority for some other delegations. All that we are asking is that when we negotiate FMCT, we should also negotiate a treaty preventing the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space. This is fully in line with the spirit of relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. It is also the best way to break the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, by addressing the concerns of all sides in a comprehensive and balanced manner. This is far from holding FMCT hostage. On the contrary, however good it may sound, to argue in favour of the so-called "opposition to linkage" means in fact that a country will only contemplate the negotiation of its own priority items, at the expense of the primary concerns and the priority items of others. Is that fair and reasonable?

It must be pointed out that the Conference on Disarmament items are all closely connected with security and that the different aspects of security are inherently inseparable. Accordingly, these Conference on Disarmament items are also inescapably interconnected. As a result of a series of negative developments, including the setback of CTBT and in particular the NMD plan, serious doubt has been cast on the nature and purpose of FMCT negotiations. For that reason the issues of outer space and FMCT cannot but be closely linked.

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It will not help break the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament for countries to insist on negotiating their own priorities only and not to permit negotiations on the priority items of others We sincerely hope that all delegations will face up to reality, take due account of the concerns of others while attending to their own, and desist from continued efforts to block the PAROS negotiations.

Before I conclude, I would like to point out that the recent announcement by the United States President that the United States will not deploy NMD for the time being does not at all mean that the NMD plan has been abandoned. The decision to deploy NMD has merely been deferred while its technology is not yet ripe and there is still strong opposition from the international community. The United States President has ordered the continued development and testing of NMD. The international community should be quite clear on this point. It remains, therefore, an urgent task for the Conference on Disarmament and the international community in general to negotiate legal instruments preventing the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space and to safeguard the ABM Treaty from being scrapped or weakened. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to start the PAROS negotiations at the earliest possible time.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? The United States of America: Ambassador Grey, you have the floor.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): Mr. President, I regret to be compelled to speak again at this stage of our deliberations, but the statement just made by the distinguished representative of China must be addressed promptly.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty was concluded in 1972 by the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It was negotiated and signed in a very different era, under political and military circumstances which are now a matter of history and which have little to do with the world today.

The Treaty has been amended before and can be amended again. The amendments that the United States is proposing will bring the Treaty up to date. They will also enable it to continue fulfilling its essential purpose: making sure that the strategic nuclear deterrent forces of the Untied States and of the Russian Federation are not threatened by missile defence capabilities of the other country. This basic understanding makes it possible for the Untied States and the Russian Federation to continue their mutual reductions in offensive nuclear arms, and to negotiate further agreements for that purpose.

As a political and diplomatic reality dating from 1972, the ABM Treaty regime did not contemplate the new threats that are emerging now and that affect the safety and well-being of

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the people of the United States. If the ABM Treaty regime were to fail, the responsibility for that - and for all the results that might ensue - would rest with those who were insisting that the regime had to remain static and could not be adapted to meet current realities.

In diplomacy, as in real life, factors that do not continue to evolve and grow are ultimately doomed to decline and die.

When I spoke on 31 August 2000, I emphasized that the limited system of national missile defence which the United States Government is considering would defend the people of the United States against a small-scale ballistic missile attack from certain countries of concern. I also stated quite explicitly that this limited system of national missile defence is not designed to provide defence against the ballistic missiles of Russia or China.

With these realities in mind, I am puzzled at the intensity of the concerns that have been expressed.

We reject allegations that actions or plans of the United States attest to a desire for hegemony, or any intent to carry out nuclear blackmail, or any supposed quest for absolute freedom to use force or threaten to use force in international relations.

These assertions have no basis in reality. A limited system of national missile defence does not give anyone hegemony. Indeed, in today's world, hegemony is in any case unattainable. The world is too diverse, too complex, too open to new ideas, for hegemony.

The era of empires is over, as is the era of one-party States. Information and ideas cannot be controlled by any Party or by any Government. People of all backgrounds have the opportunity, the capability, and the right to make up their own minds. Rote repetition of slogans and clichés that distort reality cannot change this essential fact.

In the end, the plans of the Untied States are exactly as I have described them. That is all they are, and there is nothing more to infer or imply.

In the agenda adopted on 18 January 2000 by the 66 member States of the Conference on Disarmament , the third item reads as follows: "Prevention of an arms race in outer space".

The United States agrees that it is appropriate for the Conference to keep this topic under review. On the other hand, we have repeatedly pointed out that there is no arms race in outer space - nor any prospect of an arms race in outer space, for as far down the road as anyone can see.

In the statement I gave on 31 August, I explained that the United States is committed to the exploration and use of outer space by all nations for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all humanity. This is specifically provided in our national space policy.

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It would serve no useful purpose to repeat all the remarks I made on 31 August, but I recommend that statement to any one who desires to review the facts. One salient point may bear repeating: plans of the United States for a possible system of national missile defence do not involve emplacing any weapon in outer space.

On the contrary, the missile defence system we are considering is essentially a terrestrial system that would use land-based interceptors, launchers, and radars.

Satellites of whatever description are not weapons. Any discussion of the overall purposes and functions of satellites could not be limited to a small number that might provide early warning information or data about threat missiles. As I pointed out on 31 August, many countries have satellites orbiting the earth that provide various types of data for military purposes to ships, aircraft and ground forces worldwide. This includes some members of the Conference who are strong advocates of active negotiations on a new outer space treaty.

Discussions in a subordinate body of the Conference would have to take this reality into account. In a broader sense, such discussions would have to grapple with the need to enhance international peace and security while simultaneously protecting the security interests of States that have substantial assets in outer space and that carryout important activities there.

These questions are not trivial. Nor are they easy to answer. Until the member States of the Conference have worked out answers that satisfy us all, it serves no constructive purpose to insist that the Conference must conduct negotiations on a new outer space treaty.

Much energy has been devoted to developing an overall menu of activities, so the Conference on Disarmament can finally get down to substantive work. Although I deeply regret that these efforts did not succeed in the year 2000, the proposals of two former Presidents of the Conference - Ambassador Lint of Belgium and Ambassador Amorim of Brazil - have given all of us substantial hope for early agreement in 2001.

The plain and simple fact is that all members of the Conference have committed themselves to supporting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. In addition, they have already agreed on terms of reference for such negotiations.

Many successive Presidents of the Conference have reached the conclusion that a fissile material cut-off treaty is ripe for negotiations in the Conference, whereas nuclear disarmament and outer space are not.

There has not yet been agreement on the wording of draft mandates for subordinate bodies that would deal with nuclear disarmament and outer space. On the other hand, member States appear to be very close to reaching agreement on terms of reference that would permit thorough and far-reaching discussions.

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If we are to speak of overall priorities, it is important to bear in mind that many members of the Conference attach very great importance to the establishment of a subordinate body on nuclear disarmament. The United States is not among that group of countries, but we share their commitment to the underlying long-term goal. In addition, we understand their desire that the Conference address the subject of nuclear disarmament in a structured and systematic way.

Over the past two years, the delegation of the United States has made substantial efforts to reach a compromise that would accommodate this desire of theirs. As I said on 31 August, I am confident that if the terms of reference for consideration of nuclear disarmament were the only outstanding issue, member States could resolve it expeditiously.

In practice, it is the unwise and unrealistic insistence on immediate negotiations on a new outer space treaty that keeps the Conference from establishing an appropriate subordinate body to discuss nuclear disarmament.

The longstanding deadlock likewise prevents negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, and I have repeatedly expressed intense concern about that.

As a final paradox, the unwise and unrealistic insistence on immediate negotiations on a new outer space treaty also prevents the Conference from conducting organized and sustained discussions on outer space issues. In other words, insistence on immediate negotiations on a new outer space treaty is actually blocking a necessary step that would have to occur before any such negotiations could conceivably begin.

This is counterproductive, at best. But even that amounts to a serious under-statement. After all, the word "counterproductive" implies that delegations who have taken a certain position really do wish to produce constructive results.

To us, at least, this seems to be an unwise and unwarranted assumption. Instead, we believe that the delegations employing these tactics may actually intend to produce utter paralysis, for the sake of blocking negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. And if, in practice, the tactics of these delegations likewise prevent the Conference from conducting organized deliberations on nuclear disarmament, they appear to be entirely willing to sacrifice that priority of a wide range of other member States.

Mr. President, I realize that this is a stark analysis - and a rather unpleasant one. But in all frankness I must submit to you, Sir, that the analysis I have given is neither more stark, nor more unpleasant, than the excruciating and extended paralysis that still afflicts the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this point? This does not seem to be the case.

That concludes our business for today. The next and, we hope, the last plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 21 September 2000, at 10 a.m.

As I mentioned to you earlier, we will convene in an informal plenary meeting - I suggest in 10 minutes' time - to start the consideration of the draft annual report.

The meeting was rose at 10.50 a.m.